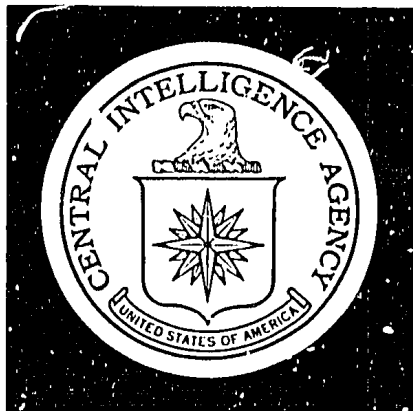


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OFFICE OF
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MEMORANDUM

Changing Attitudes in Somalia

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21 January 1970

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O F F I C E O F N A T I O N A L E S T I M A T E S

21 January 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Changing Attitudes in Somalia*

1. Somalia's Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), a military junta which took power on 21 October 1969, has yet to develop a real personality. Its spokesmen have talked a lot about eradicating corruption and incompetence at home, living up to their international commitments (implying support of the dissident Somali minorities in Ethiopia and Kenya), and maintaining a policy of "positive neutrality" (non-alignment with a lean to the left). But, apart from imprisoning former Prime Minister Egal and some of his colleagues, restricting the movements of the diplomatic corps (especially the Americans),

* This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Clandestine Services.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

21 January 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Changing Attitudes in Somalia*

1. Somalia's Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), a military junta which took power on 21 October 1969, has yet to develop a real personality. Its spokesmen have talked a lot about eradicating corruption and incompetence at home, living up to their international commitments (implying support of the dissident Somali minorities in Ethiopia and Kenya), and maintaining a policy of "positive neutrality" (non-alignment with a lean to the left). But, apart from imprisoning former Prime Minister Egal and some of his colleagues, restricting the movements of the diplomatic corps (especially the Americans),

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and quietly expelling the US Peace Corps, the SRC has not done very much. Its members seem to be still primarily concerned with jockeying for position and guarding against possible counter-revolutionary moves.

2. The SRC - composed of 20 Army officers and five police officers - apparently represents most major viewpoints, regions, clans, and educational backgrounds in the country. General Mohamed Siad, titular head of the council and Commander of the Armed Forces, is an opportunistic, unscrupulous, experienced maneuverer with a reputation for resourcefulness. He has endeavored to portray himself to Western observers as a moderate in contrast with other, younger council members. At the moment, however, a clique of 13 junior officers (more nationalistic, puritanical, and fed up with the establishment than their elders) appears to be in the ascendancy. We are not sure whether recent anti-foreign moves resulted from their initiatives or Siad's. Siad and his fellow senior officers will probably be opposed by this younger group for quite some time, but we cannot yet predict which faction or individual will emerge on top.

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3. While this struggle for leadership goes on, the SRC is in an anti-foreign mood, and US interests are threatened as they never were under Egal's regime. This is partly because the SRC appears genuinely afraid of an armed attack from Ethiopia, which they tend to regard as an American puppet. Egal, who visited President Nixon just before the coup, was widely considered to be a protege of the US. The revulsion among junior officers against the corruption of his regime has thus fueled anti-US sentiment.

4. The role of the Soviets in all this is difficult to assess. As the principal suppliers, trainers, and advisers of the Somali Army for several years, the Soviets have some influence on the regime, particularly in military and security matters. We don't know how much, partly because the Soviets seem to prefer remaining in the background. Moscow has been remarkably circumspect in its public pronouncements, characterizing the SRC as less progressive than the new regimes in Libya and the Sudan.

5. Beyond the broad aim of displacing Western and enhancing Communist influence, it is difficult to understand precisely what the Soviets hope to get out of Somalia.

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Perhaps space-tracking stations (for which the Somali location and climate are well suited) or facilities for the new Soviet Indian Ocean naval flotilla. Moscow would certainly like to have the US out [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] and would like to see Western influence reduced in Kenya and Ethiopia, but it's hard to see how a strong position in Somalia would lead toward these goals. Our best guess is that the Soviets simply treated Somalia as a target of opportunity when they decided in 1963 to become its arms supplier. They may also have moved to pre-empt the Chinese Communists. Whatever their reasons, they seem still to be unsure of what use to make of their presence there. They have been burned before in Africa by becoming over-identified with particular regimes (e.g., Ghana and Mali).

6. Moscow's apparent wariness in Somalia is probably matched by that of the Somalis. Their suspicion and scorn for those not fortunate enough to be born Somali is celebrated throughout Africa and has probably registered with Moscow as well. It is possible, of course, that SRC members may prove to be more eager than their predecessors to link their fortunes with foreigners. We consider this unlikely. The Somalis are a fiercely independent lot and will probably remain so.

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7. These same nationalistic tendencies will probably be strong enough in the new regime to make it increasingly difficult for Westerners to do business in Somalia. All Americans in Somalia - be they diplomats, AID administrators, or businessmen - are being watched carefully. The few US-owned firms there have already encountered increased petty harassment. In the past, however, the Somali governments have been practical enough to realize that a country as fundamentally poor as Somalia needs foreign investment and aid. We would guess that the SRC will content itself with collecting higher taxes and insisting that Somalis play a bigger role in the firms. But nationalization, partial or complete, cannot be ruled out.

8. It is in the US interest, as adviser and arms supplier to Ethiopia, to maintain the two-year old Somali détente with Ethiopia and Kenya. The USSR also appears to think its interests are served by Somali restraint. But the Somalis, for their own reasons, may try to revive insurgency and underwrite sabotage in its neighboring states. The concept of a "Greater Somalia," de-emphasized by Egal during his regime, still has considerable appeal to Somalis. Hence, scrapping some features of the détente might enhance the popularity of the regime and satisfy aggressive Army leaders. The SRC is

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aware, however, that the Somali Army would be no match for the Ethiopian, and we doubt that they would rush into a major conflict. They are likely to be further deterred from large scale border skirmishes by their current preoccupation with internal stability. The outlook is for increased tension on the frontiers, some unpleasant incidents with the neighbors, and in time a general deterioration of relations in the area.

9. We also think that the SRC is giving some thought to breaking relations with the US. There is said to be considerable sentiment on the SRC for doing so, and those who favor this are genuinely afraid of US power and suspicious of all US activities in the Horn. But the SRC is likely to draw back from the brink, especially while it still has hopes for US aid in 1970*. Expulsion, if it does occur, would probably not greatly damage US interests in the area, but it would make it more difficult to keep track of developments in this part of the world.

* Current plans in Washington are for phasing out bilateral aid to Somalia after fiscal 1970. Since 1954, the US has extended approximately \$72 million in aid to Somalia.